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“Happily Ever After: A Study of Social Correlates of Marital Unhappiness and Policy Implications”

A Thesis

Presented to the

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

By

Benjamin Brian Sprajcar

December 2004



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## **Abstract**

This study examines the variable *happiness with marriage* within the context of 14 independent variables. The 14 independent variables are sex, number of years of education, income, church attendance, job satisfaction, importance of having a fulfilling job, work hours, age, television hours watched per day, number of children, class identification, divorce, race and religious denomination. The purpose of this study is to help expose factors that affect marital happiness and to then suggest policy ideas that are directed at alleviating these problems. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), more specifically the General Social Survey (GSS), I was able to accomplish the appropriate tests to determine if any of the above variables are significantly related to marital happiness. Due to the nature of this study, the survey data has already been collected by the researchers who make the SPSS and GSS. This allowed me to use pre-existing data from reputable sources so I did not have to survey others. Of the independent variables, income and job satisfaction are the only two variables that show significant relationships with the dependent variable, happiness with marriage. The results show that people who make higher incomes are more likely to be very happy with their marriages and that people who are very satisfied with their job are more likely to be very happy with their marriages. Recommendations that result from these findings include marital counseling being made available to people in lower income brackets at a low charge or no charge and the need for programs that promote job satisfaction among workers. It is the hope that these recommendations will help decrease unhappiness in a marriage.

## **I. Introduction**

The concern of this study is to focus in on happiness in marriage and the societal and cultural factors that affect that reality. To limit my field of research I focused on marital happiness and unhappiness within the United States. Happiness in a person's marriage can be a big factor for the future survival of a marriage. Constant tales of unhappy marriages plague the newspapers, television and radios worldwide

Uncovering possible factors that affect happiness in a marriage, either positively or negatively, can be extremely useful in policy creation. Many couples in today's society are finding that many minor problems are adding up quickly and having a negative impact on their married life. Divorce is ever present in our society. If this research can help married couples eliminate problems before they can end in to divorce, maybe society will benefit from this. Unhappily married couples bring a dark cloud to family life, and thus to the larger society as a whole. Unhappy couples go to work and find that they are having trouble keeping their mind on their tasks. Children suffer because the negative home-life they find themselves with increases the chances of domestic violence due to the strain of an unhappy existence. Divorce ties up the legal system and financially bankrupts one or both members who find they cannot survive on their own. By finding which factors cause happiness or unhappiness in a marriage, suggestions can then be made to create programs that help couples deal with problems. Perhaps, counseling for troubled couples could be initiated to show couples that problems can be alleviated with the help of a trained professional and that divorce does not have to be the outcome. If just one couple can be spared from unhappiness, one child from the

guilt of thinking he/she has caused a divorce, or one husband or wife saved from death by domestic violence, then I would feel that this research project has been well worth the effort.

The general research question examined is, which social and cultural factors significantly affect happiness with marriage? It is an assumption of this research that happiness in a marriage has a direct correlation to divorce rates. The degree of happiness in marriage is the dependent variable for this research. The independent variables that are in this study have emerged from the literature review as variables that are considered to be important with regards to happiness in marriage.



## **II. Literature Review**

“Given that almost all couples commence their marriages with satisfying relationships, what enables some couples to sustain continuing high relationship satisfaction, while satisfaction erodes for others?” (Halford, Kline, Markman and Stanley, 2003, p.3) This is the main question for this research. Unhappy marriages can be a huge problem for society. Angry, emotionally unstable people are not productive people. And it does not help that “few people can help being exposed to the issue: violence in the family and celebrity divorces are standard fare for news programs, and magazine articles decrying the breakdown of the family,” (Finsterbusch and McKenna, 1994, p.94). The divorce rate began to increase during the 1960s. It doubled between 1966 and 1976, then leveled off during the 1980s at a historically high level. Currently, about one-half of all first marriages are expected to end in divorce. (Amato and Rogers, 1997, p.2) This points to an enormous amount of unhappiness in marriages. And to make matters worse, “public tolerance of divorce appears to have increased especially dramatically over the last few decades,” (Gerstel, 1991, p.269). Furthermore, “the quality of the parents’ relationship has a serious impact on children.” (Renkl, 2001, p.1) It is important for children to have happy parents because “children with happy parents have better social skills and are less depressed.” (Renkl, 2001, p.1) And those who “keep an angry, belittling marriage together for the sake of their kids tend to raise children whose marriages are as miserable as the ones they grew up in.” (Elias, 2001, p.2) The emotional well-being of everyone in the family is directly tied to the quality of the parents’ relationship. (Renkl, 2001, p.2) The environment of the family should be

caring and nurturing, not stressful and violent. Halford et al. (2003) state that “in most Western countries 50% or more of couples who marry remain together for the rest of their lives and the vast majority of these couples report being satisfied in their relationship at least most of the time.” (p.15) This is of the utmost importance because, “For a society to survive, its population must reproduce and its young must be trained to perform adult roles and to have the values and attitudes that will motivate them to contribute to society,” (Finsterbusch and McKenna, 1994, p.94).

In Sociology: Experiencing Changing Societies by Kammeyer, Yetman, and Ritzer, (1997) the concept of society shaping marriages is explained. The authors state that social norms greatly influence a marriage from the earliest stages. Marital quality and factors which influence it are also closely examined. One such factor they contend is homogony or “marriage between people with similar characteristics- such as religion, race, education, ethnicity, nationality, and social class.” (1997, p.373) Kammeyer et al. (1997) claim “couples who are more religious are more likely to report being happily married.” (p.373) Booth, Branaman, Johnson and Sica (1995) back this up by saying that it is “because many religions stress the value of keeping families intact. Individuals whose marriages are troubled may view increased (religious) involvement as a way to strengthen the relationship.” (p.3) Booth et al. (1995) also say “divine interaction through prayer, meditation, and Bible reading may help the individual resolve and interpret problems and increase a sense of self-worth.” (pp.3-4) Scott and Warren (1993) add the fact that couples “enter into a union which establishes not just a legal relationship, but a blood relationship which makes them one person,” (p.12). Scott and

Warren (1993) further explain this by saying that “human marriage is seen as prophetically representing the covenant between Christ and his Church,” (p.18). In addition, Kammeyer et al. (1997) say that “higher levels of educational attainment, occupational status, and economical success are also associated with higher marital quality.” ( pp.373-375) To support Kammeyer et al.’s claim, DeBoer and Rogers (2001) note that “employment contributes to lower levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress” as well as “acting as a stress buffering resource, protecting individual well-being when other roles are unsatisfying.” (p.4)

To further look at religion, Scott and Warren (1993) state “Jesus taught that divorce was wrong, that God did not intend it to happen, and that he himself saw it as falling far short of moral imperfection” (p.35). The Catholics took this up, “the absolute Catholic prohibition against divorce arose in the twelfth century both as canonical regulation supported by sacramental theory, and as theological doctrine buttressed by ecclesiastical law,” (Scott and Warren, 1993, p.53). Divorce is thus forbidden in Catholicism, but annulments are allowed under certain conditions. An annulment can only be made if “one of the parties did not fully consent to the marriage, or if they were not able to fulfill their marital obligations, or if they had not received dispensation from one of the canonical impediments to a valid marriage” (Scott and Warren, 1993, p.66). In theory, one who is Catholic and gets a divorce cannot remarry unless they want cast out of the religion. To remarry is to commit adultery in the eyes of God and is therefore wrong. An annulment is the only way to get separated from your husband or wife in the Catholic tradition.

In Hunt and Colander, (1999) variations in the family structure over the last few decades are examined. The transformation of family life, shifts in roles, and the effects these have on marriages are all explained and reviewed. Hunt and Colander (1999) claim that “the family may take new forms as social trends demand; it may bend with the winds of change.” ( p.168) Hunt and Colander (1999) look at *male dominance* in the past and how “technological advances in labor-saving household appliances and family planning freed women for leisure and market-oriented activities.” (p.157) The result is that women rely less on males for their survival. (Hunt and Colander, 1999, p.158) DeBoer and Rogers (2001) add that the “increases in married women’s absolute and relative income significantly increase their marital happiness and well-being.” ( p.2) The downside is that “married men’s well-being is significantly lower when married women’s proportional contributions to the total family income are increased”. (DeBoer and Rogers, 2001, p.2) This conflict arises because it directly changes “marital power dynamics”. (Deboer and Rogers, 2001, p.3) As Cheryl Jarvis (2002) points out, “When compared to their single counterparts, married women have more stress, less sense of mastery, and lower self-esteem. Married men, on the other hand, are healthier and happier and live longer than single men,” (p.339).

Hunt and Colander (1999) do a good job of discussing society as a constantly changing reality. They say that “society changes and so too, do the institutions in it. With new technologies, the optimal economic division of labor changes, and as it changes, so too, do the functions of families.” (1999, p.168) This supports that, as time goes on, what makes marriages happy and unhappy can change and morph into

something new. That is why it is important to monitor variables that affect happiness with marriage. With all of the new opportunities available to women and men in the workplace it becomes important for couples to “ensure there is sufficient time in their lives to raise families, share love and make friends.” (Halford et al. 2003, p.19)

Families on the Fault Line by Lillian B. Rubin (1995) deals mainly with the *changing roles of women and men* in society and how the economy puts stress on marriages. “Enormous social, political, and economic changes have been at work, defining and redefining family and social life, relations between women and men, between parents and children, and among the various ethnic and racial groups that make up the tapestry of American life.” (Rubin, 1995, p.7) Rubin (1995) looks into stresses of working class families and explains how stress manifests itself in marriages and destroys them. She writes that often times “they (married couples) go to work everyday to provide for their families often at jobs they hate.” (Rubin, 1995, p.31) This is an example of how an unsatisfactory job can lead to problems in a marriage. Rubin (1995) illustrates this point by stating that “the financial and emotional turmoil that engulfs families when a man loses his job all too frequently pushes marriages that were already fragile over the brink.” (p.120) Loss of a job enhances the likelihood of a divorce. It is not the only factor, but as Rubin’s book illustrates, it is one of the main factors in an unhappy marriage.

Several of the authors have reported that *age* is an important factor in determining happiness in a marriage. Kammeyer et al. (1990) point out that “A paradox of married life is that newly married couples often consider their first year or so together as the most

difficult and yet the happiest. The early years of a marriage can be difficult because of the adjustments that new husbands and wives have to make,” (p.387). As Amato, Johnson and VanLaningham (2001) point out “most studies suggest a U-shaped association characterized by high marital happiness in the early years of marriage, a decline in marital happiness during the middle years, and a rise in marital happiness in later years.” (p.2) Gerstel (1991) performed a study in which “the median age of respondents [who got divorced] was 33 years, and the mean number of years married was nine,” (p.272). For people who are just married, they can find themselves “faced with many challenges, including establishing a division of labor, redefining ties to kin, and learning how to handle conflict in the relationship.” (Amato et al. 2001, p.6) But these beginning years are exciting and new to newlyweds, which is why the happiness levels are up. Koretz (2003) states that “happiness peaks at age 18, declines until 40, and then moves higher- though never approaching the joy of youth.” (p.3) For those who are older, “those who retired early report higher levels of marital happiness than those who retired late.” (Elder, Kaufman and Taniguchi, 2001, p.5) This would seem to contradict my hypothesis. I believe that when a person is older happiness rises because the stresses of child rearing and work are lifted. My research will seek to observe if this is really the case.

A lot of problems seem to stem from the fact that, “Today, marriage is understood mainly as a path toward self-fulfillment” (Popenoe, 1991, p.98). People are no longer concerned so much with completing each other as they are of meeting a need that they have. Popenoe (1991) explains that “No longer compromising a set of norms and social

obligations that are enforced widely, marriage today is a voluntary relationship that individuals can make and break at will,” (p.98). Marriage has lost some of its deeper meanings, and as laws change to make divorce easier, marriage loses its power.

Popenoe (1991) also mentions that it is the children who suffer the most in unhappy marriages when he states that “the quality of life for children in the past 25 years has worsened,” (p.99). This is because “childbearing is most successful when it involves two parents, both of whom are strongly motivated to the task,” (Popenoe, 1991, p.99). With the increasing number of couples who divorce and separate, children are being hurt in the process.

With regard to children, a couple must decide at some point if they want children and if so, how many. However, “a marriage changes when couples become parents. Couples with a new baby experience a number of problems that tend to reduce their level of marital satisfaction,” (Kammeyer et al., 1990, p.389). Kammeyer et al. (1990) claim that, “the strains of raising children produce a negative effect on the quality of marriage, and this effect extends into the later years of life,” (p.391). This would seem to counter what I think, which is the greater the number of children, the happier the couple is in their marriage. The Kabat-Zinn’s study (2002) supports my claim in concluding that children “are pure potentiality, embodying vitality, emergence, renewal and hope,” (p.101) between a husband and a wife. Children allow the parents to come closer and bond in the experience of raising their children.

In looking into the *social class* variable, Judith Stacey (1990) points out that “rising divorce and cohabitation rates, working mothers, two-earner households, single

and unwed parenthood, and matrilineal, extended, and fictive kin support networks appeared earlier and more extensively among poor and working-class people” (p.103). Unfavorable circumstances such as monetary problems or lack of health insurance seem to be more prevalent for lower class people than they are for upper-class people. Gerstel (1991) points out that “in most previous research on separation and divorce, the respondents are a heterogeneous group. They include people in the working class as well as the middle class whose household incomes range from under \$4,000 to over \$50,000 with a median of \$18,000,” (p.271). Orbuck et al (2002) have recently concluded that “financial problems put enormous strains on marital and family relationships. Income is one of the best predictors of family stability and divorce is more common in the lower income strata than in the middle and upper strata.” (p.19, 179-202) This finding seems to point out that social class may have no effect on marital happiness when social class is indicated by income.

Religion, race, educational attainment, and social class all seem to be relevant variables for this study. The literature shows that the more religious a couple is, the more happiness they have in their marriage. Likewise, higher educational attainment leads to more happiness in a marriage. Lower classes face more stressors and financial dilemmas than those in higher classes. The literature shows that higher occupational status and higher pay lead to happier couples who are able to support their family. The literature also shows that the male dominated society is slowly being dissolved as women gain more power in the home and workplace. This may lead to both sexes equally enjoying marriage. The literature also points out that age may have a “U” shaped curve where



people are happy at the youngest and oldest years of marriage and experience a decline during the middle years.

In light of the literature review, the independent variables from the General Social Survey that relate to the above topics are age, years of education, church attendance, religious preference, social class, race, number of children a couple has, prior divorces, and several work related variables that measure satisfaction and the importance of having that job. These independent variables will be tested and compared with what the authors have stated in order to see if the same holds true for my sample.

### **III. Conceptual Framework**

The theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels offer some additional help in understanding the need to include certain independent variables in this study. In “The Communist Manifesto” (1998), theories pertaining to marital happiness and the factors which affect it are set forth. Most of the variables in this study (such as social class, income, race, sex, religion), can be directly tied into Marxian thinking. According to Marx and Engels (1998), the world is based upon “a new hierarchy founded on the differences of wealth, an inequality all the more invidious since it was cloaked in nominal equality,” (p. x). This division separates the populace into two basic sides, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Marx and Engels (1998) state in the opening of the book that, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,” (p.50). Society is formed by the bourgeoisie, the wealthy landowners, and the proletariat, the poor. The authors back this by stating that, “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other- bourgeoisie and proletariat,” (1998, p.51). The bourgeoisie are those in power, those who control the production of supplies in society. In order to make maximum profit, they need the proletariat to do all of the heavy work, the factory work. In doing this, “the bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation,” (Marx and Engels, 1998, p.53). People are taken out of their homes and placed into factories, sacrificing their family life in the name of money. “These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other

article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market,” (Marx and Engels, 1998, p.58). The proletariat find themselves being exploited by the bourgeoisie for their livelihood. Marx and Engels (1998) also point out that, “Not only are they [the proletariat] slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over looker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself” (p.59). A widening gap forms that slowly does away with the middle class.

The variable that emerges as significant for family relations is “class.” The fact that the proletariat is forced to work long, hard hours in dangerous conditions means less time for the family. With no time for the family, can a marriage be happy? Modern society can be divided along proletariat and bourgeoisie categories. The bourgeoisie, according to Marx, has destroyed the family unit of the proletariat. This supports my hypothesis in the next section is reference to the “class” variable. Basically, upper-class people should be enjoying happier marriages.

Marx and Engels (1998) state that, the bourgeoisie “has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property into a few hands,” (p.56). This quote can be dissected to include any and all of my variables. For instance, since the bourgeoisie controls the means of production, they have the highest profit. Thus people with higher incomes, the bourgeoisie, should have happier marriages for the reasons referred to in the previous section. Also, as the amount of hours worked per week increases, the level of happiness in the marriage should fall. We may contend that the bourgeoisie, who work fewer hours, experience more marital happiness than the

proletariat, who work long hours and thus have less time for positive marriages and family relations.

Age and sex become marketable commodities to the bourgeoisie mainly because they “all are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex” (Marx and Engels, 1998, p.59). Age and sex have meanings regarding who is useful or productive in the society. Looking at sex, one can see from the literature review that males tend to dominate the females traditionally. This suggests exploitation, but now it is on a smaller scale. Males should be happier in marriage. Also, older people should express more happiness in marriage than those who are much younger.

All institutions in society are there to exploit the proletariat; “Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests,” (Marx and Engels, 1998, p.63). When this is the case, the proletariat are naturally going to be unhappier with their marriages because they will have less education, increased work hours, less job satisfaction, and lower incomes. When the institutions in a society are aimed at keeping people from transcending classes, one side will benefit and one side will be unhappy. In today’s society it is becoming more and more apparent that there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The middle class is disappearing. The rich continue to exploit their workers by paying them low wages and by asking them to work long hours. The means of production are in the hands of a few who may treat workers and their families as commodities who are easily replaceable. Again, social class and class related variables would appear to have important implications for happiness in marriage. In this study, the Marxian perspective

will be used extensively in the interpretation of GSS data on degrees of marital happiness

#### IV. Methodology

For this study, my dependent variable will be “happiness in marriage.”

“Happiness in marriage” is defined by the General Social Survey (GSS) as the respondent’s view of happiness in his or her marriage. The choices are “very happy,” “pretty happy,” and “not too happy.” This is an ordinal level variable. This variable has three possible categories that the respondents could have chosen. These categories are “Not Too Happily Married,” “Pretty Happily Married,” and “Very Happily Married.” Out of the 1,500 respondents in the GSS, 795 said that they were married, 165 said they were widowed, 213 said they were divorced, 40 said they were separated and 286 reported that they have never been married. Only 1 respondent was reported as missing. Of the 795 respondents who said they were married, 790 answered regarding the variable “happiness in marriage”.

The first independent variable is “sex.” This is defined as the gender of the respondent, which is male or female. It is a nominal level variable. My hypothesis for this variable is that *men experience more happiness in a marriage than women do*. According to Marxist theory, marriage is an oppressive institution for women because of male dominance. Women should have higher levels of marital unhappiness.

My second independent variable is “education.” This is defined as the respondent’s highest year of school completed. This is a ratio level variable with values ranging from 0 to 20. My hypothesis is that *people with less education experience more unhappiness in their marriages than those with more years of education*. Kammeyer et al. (1997) back this up by saying, “Higher levels of educational attainment, occupational

status, and economical success are associated with higher marital quality,” (pp.373-375).

One could apply Marxism logic to this by saying that the rich have more education therefore have an advantage over the poor in having a good marital relationship.

The third independent variable is labeled as “income 4.” This is “total family income” in quartiles. There are four categories here. The first is if the respondent makes “\$24,999 or less” a year. The second category is “\$25,000 to \$39,999” a year. The third category is “\$40,000 to \$59,999” a year and the fourth is “\$60,000 or more” a year. Thus it is an ordinal level variable. My hypothesis for this variable is that *couples with a higher total income are happier in their married lives than those who earn less*. The previous Kammeyer et al. (1997) quote is applicable here. Marxist theory muses that the bourgeoisie advantages make for greater happiness in marriage. Marriage of the rich can be used as a way to insure that the wealthy stay together and concentrate capital holdings.

The fourth independent variable I chose is labeled “attend.” This is defined as the respondent’s frequency of church attendance. This is a ordinal level variable with nine categories. The categories are “never”, “less than once a year”, “once a year”, “several times a year”, “once a month”, “2 to 3 times a month”, “nearly every week”, “every week”, and “more than once a week”. Kammeyer et al. (1997) claim that “couples who are more religious are more likely to report being happily married,” (p.373). My hypothesis is that *people who attend church more are happier in their marriages than those who do not*. My hypothesis is based on Kammeyer’s argument that stresses the integrative function of religion for married couples. Also, “many religions stress the value of keeping families intact”. (Booth et al., 1995, p.3) Couples experiencing the

“religious life” may work harder at establishing happier marriages.

The fifth independent variable is “job satisfaction.” This is the respondent’s satisfaction with his or her current job. There are four categories to this variable. They are “very satisfied,” “moderately satisfied,” “a little dissatisfied,” and “very dissatisfied.” This is an ordinal level variable. My hypothesis for this variable is that *people with less job satisfaction experience less happiness with their marriage than those who have more job satisfaction*. This hypothesis is clearly suggested by Marxian logics that work experiences influence marriage and family life. A spouse who brings home a negative attitude from work will affect his or her marriage relationship.

The sixth independent variable is “importance of having a fulfilling job.” This is defined by GSS as the importance of the respondent having a fulfilling job. There are five categories to this variable. They are “One of the most important,” “Very important,” “Somewhat important,” “Not too important,” and “Not at all important.” This is an ordinal level variable. My hypothesis for this variable is that *people who think that a job is not too important in their life experience more happiness in marriage than those who think a job is very important*. If work is the focal point of one’s life then marital relations may suffer. Marxian theory can be applied to supply the logic for this hypothesis.

Likewise, the regular number of hours worked should affect one’s level of marital happiness. This is defined as the number of hours the respondent worked last week. It is a ratio level variable. My hypothesis for this variable is that *people who work longer number of hours a week will experience less happiness in marriage than those who work less hours a week*. How can a marriage be happy when the couple is so absorbed by



work? Using Marxian logic, one could say that the upper-class control of the workplace forces the lower-class to work more hours to fulfill profit margins and quotas at the expense of the lower-class marital happiness.

“Age” should also be an important variable in this study. This is simply the respondent’s age. Age is a ratio level variable. My hypothesis for this variable is that *older people experience more happiness in marriage than younger people do*. Again, this is due to my belief that an older person is more secure in where he or she stands in life and with his or her spouse than a younger person would be. Support for this claim also appears in the literature review section. Younger people may be prone to struggle financially in the first few years of marriage, thus facing a true test of the marriage whereas an older person would struggle with his or her spouse and not think of abandoning one another.

Another independent variable I have chosen to include in the analysis is “TV hours.” This refers to the total number of television hours the respondent watches in a day. This is a ratio level variable. It ranges from 0 to 24. My hypothesis here is that *high amounts of television watching may lead to more unhappiness in a marriage*. Through personal experience I know that, when one spouse sits and watches excessive amounts of television and the other spouse does not, that spouse may become angered because his or her spouse is sitting around and not paying any attention to him or her. Also, if both members are watching television over long hours then they are not spending time interacting intensively as when doing family or community projects together. Watching television usually requires at least partial attention and thus is a distraction

from marital interaction. This pattern may well be an indication of marital unhappiness.

Another independent variable that may affect happiness in a marriage is the number of children the couple has. The “childs” variable is an ordinal level variable with nine categories. These categories are “0” through “7”, referring to the number of children the couple has, and “8” which means they have 8 or more children. My hypothesis here is that *couples with more children will report that they are happier with their marriage than those with less children*. Children may be a sign that the couple shares a bond of love for each other and that they are willing to raise their children together. Thus, having more children should equal more happiness in a marriage. However, it must be acknowledged that average family size is greater in the working class and, thus, social class may overshadow the potentially positive influence of children on level of marital happiness.

“Class” is a significant independent variable and it is measured by the subjective class identification of the respondent. It is an ordinal level variable with four categories. The categories are “lower class,” “working class,” “middle class,” and “upper class.” My hypothesis is that *members of the upper class experience more happiness in their marriages than those in the lower classes because they are not constrained by finances to the same degree*. Marxian logic would say that members of the upper class do not have nearly as many problems as people in lower classes. Upper class people create financial problems for the lower classes in an effort to keep them subjugated and this translates as less marital happiness among the proletarians.

The next variable is defined as whether the respondent has ever been divorced or

separated. It is a nominal level variable with two categories, “yes” and “no”. My hypothesis is that *people who have been divorced or separated will experience less happiness in marriage than those who have never been divorced or separated*. People who have experienced divorce or separation are more likely, it would seem, to have lower levels of expectations for marital happiness. This logic flows, also, from the Marxian social class influence perspective.

“Race” is another independent variable examined for affect in this study. It is measured by the race of the respondent and it is a nominal level variable with three categories. These categories are “white,” “black” and “other.” My hypothesis is that *white people will experience more happiness in marriage than blacks or other races*. This is based on Marxian logic which would have whites as being those in power and all others subjugated. Following this thinking, “blacks” and “others” would experience less happiness with their marriages simply because of social class and work related contexts.

Lastly here is the variable of “religion.” This is defined as the respondent’s religious preference. It is a nominal level variable with 13 different categories. They are “Protestant”, “Catholic”, “Jewish”, “none”, “other”, “Buddhism”, “Hinduism”, “other Eastern”, “Muslim”, “Orthodox-Christian”, “Christian”, “Native American”, and “Inter-Nondenominational”. My hypothesis is that *respondents who say that they are Catholic will be more likely to report being happy in their marriages than those in other religions*. This is based on the history of Catholic dogma on divorce. I think respondents who equate themselves as being Catholic will be more likely to report that they are happier in their marriage regardless of reality. Fundamentalistic interdenominational Protestants

may score similar to the Catholics on the happiness in marriage variable for reasons of dogma.

My purpose in this research project is explanatory in nature. I am hoping to find “social correlates of happiness in marriage” variables that will help me explain the causes of happiness and unhappiness in a marriage. In order to find possible answers to this question I utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the General Social Survey (GSS). This package contains answers to numerous survey questions asked of 1,500 respondents. Out of this sample, 795 of the respondents are married presently and thus pertain to my study. 165 respondents reported that they were widowed, 213 respondents reported that they were divorced, 40 said they were separated, 286 reported themselves never married and 1 was missing. Of the 795 who reported themselves as married presently, three responded “Don’t Know” and two respondents did not answer. This means I studied with a sample of 790 respondents. By using this statistical package I was able to test if my independent variables have any affect on my dependent variable. The statistical tests I used were dependent on the level of measurement of the variables being tested. These data were analyzed using the computers located in the Graduate Center. The GSS software programs are present on the hard drives of these computers.

With a sample size of 790, I am generalizing to married people within the United States. The GSS takes a random sampling of the population so the respondents should be varied. Individuals are the units of analysis here.

A detailed description of the data gathering procedures is not really necessary for

my study because I am relying on survey information that has already been done. The GSS data are compiled after extensive surveys are administered to a group of randomly chosen people, numbering 1,500. This method of gathering information ensures reliability in generalizing the findings to the larger United States population. After the surveys are administered, the information is coded and entered into computers so the information can easily be accessed.

For data analysis, each of the variables I tested with happiness in marriage has a null hypothesis. In each of the 14 cases, the null hypothesis is that the independent variable and the dependent variable have no relationship to each other. The relevant statistics and significance levels in each testing situation show if the null hypothesis can be rejected or not. If the significance of the appropriate statistic is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis can be rejected. The level 0.05 is used because it allows for a five percent chance of error. In a case where the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, it is concluded that there is no relationship that exists between the variables and thus the variable happiness with marriage is not at all affected by that independent variable.

The statistical testing method I use is dependent on the level of measurement of the variable. For instance, "happiness with marriage" is an ordinal level variable. Church attendance, number of children, class, divorce, race, religion affiliation, sex, total family income, importance of a job and job satisfaction are all nominal or ordinal level variables. When testing "happiness with marriage" and one of the nominal or ordinal level variables, I used a cross tabulation procedure and chi-square procedure. For testing "happiness with marriage" and a ratio level variable, I used a one-way analysis of

variance procedure. The statistical information that results from each testing procedure proves my hypotheses true or false. This shows me which independent variables affect happiness with marriage and which ones do not.

## V. Findings

As noted, the focus is with the variable of *happiness with marriage*. Since this is an ordinal level variable, it allowed me to use cross tabulation procedure or one-way analysis of variance procedure in dealing with the remainder of my variables. Readers should note that if the other variable is nominal or ordinal, a cross tabulation procedure was used. If the other variable is interval or ratio, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was used. To help further study the cross tabulation procedure, a chi-square procedure was also used. The larger the value of chi-square is, the more the observations are different from what I would expect. Thus, the larger the chi-square value is, the lower the probability that the null hypothesis is true. The residual values on cross tabulations can also help to point out whether or not there is a relationship between the variables. For the one-way analysis of variance tests, a Bonferroni test was also run. Bonferroni tests show if there are any significant relationships between the variables. The “Findings” section is arranged by reviewing separate possible independent-dependent variable associations.

### *Sex and Marital Happiness*

Table 1 presents the data distributions on the respondent’s sex and marital happiness. The cross tabulation gives a chi-square value of 3.137 that has a significance of 0.208. Since 0.208 is greater than the 0.05 chance of error, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that there is no relationship between these two variables. It appears that one’s sex/gender has no bearing on degree of marital

happiness. This finding does not support the Marxian literature on the male bias regarding marital bliss.

**Table 1: Crosstabulation for Happiness in Marriage & Sex**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * RESPONDENTS SEX	790	52.7%	710	47.3%	1500	100.0%

**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* RESPONDENTS SEX Crosstabulation**

			RESPONDENTS SEX		Total
			MALE	FEMALE	
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	222	266	488
		% within RESPONDENTS SEX	64.3%	59.8%	61.8%
		Residual	8.9	-8.9	
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	116	162	278
		% within RESPONDENTS SEX	33.6%	36.4%	35.2%
		Residual	-5.4	5.4	
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	7	17	24
		% within RESPONDENTS SEX	2.0%	3.8%	3.0%
		Residual	-3.5	3.5	
Total	Count	345	445	790	
	% within RESPONDENTS SEX	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.137(a)	2	.208

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.48.



### *Education and Marital Happiness*

The next variable in the analysis was “education.” This variable is ratio level so a one-way analysis of variance test is appropriate. The null hypothesis was that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and a respondent’s years of education. Table 2 shows the output for this test. The test gives an F-statistic of 0.288 that has a significance of 0.750. This value is greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, according to the data, no relationship exists between a person’s education and his or her happiness in marriage. My hypothesis is again not supported by the data. Apparently, someone with less education is not more likely than a person with more education to experience any less happiness in his or her marriage. The Bonferroni test (Appendix) in this case supports the outcome as there are no significant relationships shown.

**Table 2: Oneway for Happiness in Marriage & Education**  
**Descriptives**

HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED

	N	Mean
VERY HAPPY	487	13.25
PRETTY HAPPY	277	13.29
NOT TOO HAPPY	24	12.83
Total	788	13.25

#### **ANOVA**

HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.583	2	2.291	.288	.750
Within Groups	6243.666	785	7.954		
Total	6248.249	787			

*Income and Marital Happiness*

Personal income was measured in the GSS as an ordinal level variable. This makes a cross tabulation procedure the correct one to use. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between a respondent's income and his or her happiness in marriage; please see Table 3 for test results. The cross tabulation shows a chi-square value of 27.814 that has a significance of 0.000. Since 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis can be rejected. Therefore a relationship does exist between these two variables. To uncover the relationship here we must look at the residuals. The residual for income category 4 (\$60,000 or more) and very happy is 24.6 whereas in category 1 (\$24,999 or less) and very happy it is -9.2. Income category 2 (\$25,000 to \$39,999) and very happy has a residual of -7.5 and income category 3 (\$40,000 to \$59,999) and very happy has a residual of -7.9. Category 4 is composed of those who make more than \$60,000.00 a year. This shows that, the more money a respondent makes, the more likely he or she will express being in a very happy marriage. Looking to the "Not too happy" row, the residuals show that the more money a respondent makes, the less likely they will respond that their marriage is not too happy. My hypothesis that couples with a higher income are happier in their married lives than those who make less appears to be supported. Those who make \$60,000 or more a year are more likely to respond that their marriage is very happy rather than pretty happy or not too happy. Those who earn less are more likely to respond that their marriage is not too happy.

**Table 3: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Income**  
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * total family Income in quartiles	723	48.2%	777	51.8%	1500	100.0%

**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* total family Income in quartiles Crosstabulation**

			total family Income in quartiles				Total
			1	2	3	4	
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	43	84	118	199	444
		% within total family Income in quartiles	50.6%	56.4%	57.6%	70.1%	61.4%
		Residual	-9.2	-7.5	-7.9	24.6	
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	34	59	83	81	257
		% within total family Income in quartiles	40.0%	39.6%	40.5%	28.5%	35.5%
		Residual	3.8	6.0	10.1	-20.0	
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	8	6	4	4	22
		% within total family Income in quartiles	9.4%	4.0%	2.0%	1.4%	3.0%
		Residual	5.4	1.5	-2.2	-4.6	
Total	Count	85	149	205	284	723	
	% within total family Income in quartiles	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.814(a)	6	.000

a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.59.

*Church Attendance and Happiness in Marriage*

This is an ordinal level variable and thus a cross tabulation procedure is appropriate. As always, the null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between

happiness in marriage and a respondent's church attendance. The cross tabulation gives a chi-square statistic of 10.130 that has a significance of 0.860 (Table 4). This value is greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, there is no relationship between a respondent's happiness in marriage and how often he or she attends church. This shows no support for my hypothesis that people who attend church more often are happier in marriage than those who do not attend church often. The residual pattern is sporadic, showing that there is no pattern and thus supporting the fact that there is no relationship between these two variables.

**Table 4: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage and Church Attendance**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES	770	51.3%	730	48.7%	1500	100.0%

## HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES Crosstabulation

				HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES									Total
				NEVER	LT ON CE A YEA R	ONCE A YEA R	SEVER L TIME S A YR	ONCE A MON TH	2-3X A MON TH	NRL Y EVERY WEEK	EVERY WEEK	MORE THN ONCE A WK	
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	97	38	48	71	38	36	18	92	35	473	
		% within HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES	62.6 %	64.4 %	57.8 %	67.6%	56.7 %	57.1 %	52.9 %	61.3 %	64.8 %	61.4 %	
		Residual	1.8	1.8	-3.0	6.5	-3.2	-2.7	-2.9	-.1	1.8		
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	56	18	30	31	27	25	15	54	18	274	
		% within HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES	36.1 %	30.5 %	36.1 %	29.5%	40.3 %	39.7 %	44.1 %	36.0 %	33.3 %	35.6 %	
		Residual	.8	-3.0	.5	-6.4	3.2	2.6	2.9	.6	-1.2		
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	2	3	5	3	2	2	1	4	1	23	
		% within HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES	1.3%	5.1 %	6.0%	2.9%	3.0%	3.2%	2.9 %	2.7%	1.9%	3.0 %	
		Residual	-2.6	1.2	2.5	-.1	.0	.1	.0	-.5	-.6		
	Total	Count	155	59	83	105	67	63	34	150	54	770	
		% within HOW OFTEN R ATTENDS RELIGIOUS SERVICES	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	
		Residual											

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.130(a)	16	.860

a. 9 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.02.

### *Job Satisfaction and Happiness in Marriage*

Job satisfaction is an ordinal level variable and thus a cross tabulation can be run to uncover any possible relationship with happiness in marriage. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and job satisfaction. Please see Table 5 for the data distributions. The cross tabulation gives a chi-square statistic of 34.443 that has a significance of 0.000. Since 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis can be rejected. A relationship then does in fact exist between these two variables. Looking at the table, a pattern is visible in the residuals for the very happy row. The residuals move from being positive to negative as one moves from very satisfied down the row to very dissatisfied. This shows that people who are more satisfied with their jobs are most likely to respond that they are also happier in marriage and less likely to reply that they are not too happy in marriage. People who are less satisfied with their jobs are more likely to reply that they are not too happy with their marriages. This supports my hypothesis that *people with less job satisfaction experience less happiness with their marriage than those who have more job satisfaction*. This hearkens back to the fact that work life can bleed over into a person's home life and cause marital stress and disturbance, as suggested by Marx. It makes sense that people who are more satisfied with their jobs are more satisfied with their marriages because they do not have the negative work factor contaminating marital relations.

**Table 5: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Job Satisfaction**  
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * Job Satisfaction	641	42.7%	859	57.3%	1500	100.0%

**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* Job Satisfaction Crosstabulation**

			Job Satisfaction				
			Very satisfied	Mod satisfied	A little dissatisfie d	Very dissatisfie d	Total
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	213	144	21	15	393
		% within Job Satisfaction	70.8%	56.7%	36.2%	53.6%	61.3%
	PRETTY HAPPY	Residual	28.5	-11.7	-14.6	-2.2	
		Count	81	104	32	11	228
		% within Job Satisfaction	26.9%	40.9%	55.2%	39.3%	35.6%
		NOT TOO HAPPY	Residual	-26.1	13.7	11.4	1.0
	Count		7	6	5	2	20
		% within Job Satisfaction	2.3%	2.4%	8.6%	7.1%	3.1%
		Total	Residual	-2.4	-1.9	3.2	1.1
	Count		301	254	58	28	641
		% within Job Satisfaction	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.443(a)	6	.000

a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .87.

### *Attitude About Job and Marital Happiness*

The importance of having a fulfilling job is an ordinal level variable. Table 6 shows that there is a chi-square statistic of 3.354 that has a significance of 0.910. This significance level is greater than 0.05 so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that there is no relationship between a respondent's happiness in marriage and the importance of the respondent having a fulfilling job. The residuals shown on Table 6 are not large enough to produce significant results. My hypothesis has not been supported in this case. People who think that a job is not too important in their life do not experience differences in the happiness of their marriages than those who think that their job is important.

**Table 6: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Importance of Job**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job	782	52.1%	718	47.9%	1500	100.0%



**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job Crosstabulation**

			Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job					Total
			One of most important	Very important	Somewh at important	Not too importa nt	Not at all import ant	
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	87	287	84	23	4	485
		% within Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job	56.9%	63.4%	63.2%	65.7%	50.0%	62.0 %
	PRETTY HAPPY	Residual	-7.9	6.0	1.5	1.3	-1.0	
		Count	61	152	45	11	4	273
		% within Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job	39.9%	33.6%	33.8%	31.4%	50.0%	34.9 %
		NOT TOO HAPPY	Residual	7.6	-6.1	-1.4	-1.2	1.2
	Count		5	14	4	1	0	24
		% within Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job	3.3%	3.1%	3.0%	2.9%	.0%	3.1%
		Total	Residual	.3	.1	-.1	-.1	-.2
	Count		153	453	133	35	8	782
		% within Importance to R of Having a Fulfilling Job	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0 %

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.354(a)	8	.910

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .25.

### *Work and Marital Happiness*

Work hours is a ratio level variable. This means that a one-way analysis of variance test is the appropriate test to run in this case. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and the number of hours a respondent works in a week. Table 7 reveals that the one-way analysis of variance test gives an F-statistic of 0.912 that has a significance of 0.402. Since 0.402 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that there is no relationship between a person's happiness with his or her marriage and the numbers of work hours he or she does in a week. The Bonferroni test (Appendix) also backs this up by not showing any significant pairs. My hypothesis is not supported. People who work a lot of hours each week are not less happy with their marriage than those who work fewer hours.

**Table 7: Oneway for Happiness in Marriage & Hours Worked**  
ANOVA

Number of Hours Worked Last Week

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	393.023	2	196.512	.912	.402
Within Groups	108847.928	505	215.540		
Total	109240.951	507			

*Does Age of the Respondent Affect Level of Marital Happiness?*

The variable "age" is another ratio level variable. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and a respondent's age. The one-way analysis of variance test gives an F-statistic of 1.619 that has a significance of 0.199 (Appendix). Since 0.199 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that no significant relationship exists between happiness in marriage and a

respondent's age. The Bonferroni test (Appendix) shows that there are no significant pairs; therefore it supports the result that there is no relationship. This does not support my hypothesis that *older people experience more happiness in marriage than younger people do*.

The literature review mentioned a “U” shaped curve to age and marital happiness and that may be the factor influencing the results. Newlyweds experience happiness because everything is fresh and exciting and older people experience an increase in marital happiness upon retiring and resting from their everyday work routines. However, since age is unrelated to marital happiness, maybe marital happiness just depends on the couple and other factors which are influencing that couple.

#### *Is TV Watching Symptomatic of an Unhappy Marriage?*

Television hours watched per day is the next variable analyzed and it is a ratio level variable. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and the number of television hours watched per day. The one-way analysis of variance (Appendix) test gives an F-statistic of 0.233 that has a significance level of 0.792. Since 0.792 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that no relationship exists between happiness in marriage and the number of television hours watched per day. My hypothesis is not supported since I hypothesized that *high amounts of television watching each day may lead to more unhappiness in a marriage*.

Television watching may be an event that a married couple enjoys doing together.

It may even be so trivial that no married couple considers it when faced with larger, more complex issues such as financial problems. Also, watching television may not be related to marital happiness for the simple fact that married people are too busy to take time out and watch television. When work, children and the day to day upkeep of the house come into play, married people may simply not have any time to relax and watch it.

*The Number of Children in a Family: Promise or Problem for Marital Happiness?*

Here the null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and the number of children a couple has. Table 8 shows that the cross tabulation procedure gives a chi-square statistic of 22.207 that has a significance of 0.137. Since 0.137 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. No relationship exists between these two variables. The residuals likewise show no pattern, reinforcing the fact that no relationship exists. My hypothesis is not supported since I speculated that *couples with more children will report that they are happier in their marriage than those with fewer children.*

The literature review pointed out that there was a connection between marital happiness and children, but the authors seemed unable to decide whether it was a positive or negative relationship. Since there is no relationship based on my findings, it would seem that one child or ten, marital happiness is not affected. More children do not equal more happiness in a marriage and less children do not equal more happiness in a marriage.

**Table 8: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Children**  
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * NUMBER OF CHILDREN	786	52.4%	714	47.6%	1500	100.0%

**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* NUMBER OF CHILDREN Crosstabulation**

			NUMBER OF CHILDREN									Total
			0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	EIGHT OR MORE	
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	126	83	126	77	43	19	7	0	3	484
		% within NUMBER OF CHILDREN	60.6%	60.1%	60.6%	59.2%	71.7%	76.0%	87.5%	.0%	50.0%	61.6%
		Residual	-2.1	-2.0	-2.1	-3.1	6.1	3.6	2.1	-1.8	-.7	
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	79	50	72	50	15	6	1	3	2	278
		% within NUMBER OF CHILDREN	38.0%	36.2%	34.6%	38.5%	25.0%	24.0%	12.5%	100.0%	33.3%	35.4%
		Residual	5.4	1.2	-1.6	4.0	-6.2	-2.8	-1.8	1.9	-.1	
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	3	5	10	3	2	0	0	0	1	24
		% within NUMBER OF CHILDREN	1.4%	3.6%	4.8%	2.3%	3.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	16.7%	3.1%
		Residual	-3.4	.8	3.6	-1.0	.2	-.8	-.2	-.1	.8	
	Total	Count	208	138	208	130	60	25	8	3	6	786
		% within NUMBER OF CHILDREN	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Residual	-.1	-.1	-.1	-.1	-.1	-.1	-.1	-.1	-.1	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.207(a)	16	.137

a. 13 cells (48.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.

*Does Social Class Affect Marital Happiness?*

The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and a person's class identification. Table 9 shows that the cross tabulation gives a chi-square statistic of 7.361 that has a significance of 0.289. This value is greater than 0.05, so no relationship exists between the two variables. The residuals likewise show that no relationship exists because there is no pattern to them. This does not support my hypothesis. Members of the upper-class do not experience more happiness in their marriages than members of the lower-class.

**Table 9: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Class**  
Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION	786	52.4%	714	47.6%	1500	100.0%

**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION Crosstabulation**

			SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION				
			LOWER CLASS	WORKING CLASS	MIDDLE CLASS	UPPER CLASSES	Total
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	29	236	201	19	485
		% within SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION	64.4%	65.2%	57.9%	59.4%	61.7%
		Residual	1.2	12.6	-13.1	-.7	
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	14	113	137	13	277
		% within SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION	31.1%	31.2%	39.5%	40.6%	35.2%
		Residual	-1.9	-14.6	14.7	1.7	
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	2	13	9	0	24
		% within SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION	4.4%	3.6%	2.6%	.0%	3.1%
		Residual	.6	1.9	-1.6	-1.0	
	Total	Count	45	362	347	32	786
		% within SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.361(a)	6	.289

a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .98.

*Does a Previous Divorce Jinx a Follow Up Marriage?*

The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and whether or not a respondent has ever been divorced. Table 10 shows that the cross tabulation produces a chi-square statistic of 0.645 that has a significance level

of 0.725. This significance is greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

No relationship exists between these two variables. This does not support my hypothesis since I hypothesized that *people who have been divorced or separated will experience less happiness in marriage than those who have never been divorced or separated.*

I guess that just because someone was in a bad marriage once does not mean that his or her marriage will be worse off the second time. Also, the variable was only asking about the respondent, it may have produced different results had it asked about the respondent's spouse.

**Table 10: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Divorce**  
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED	438	29.2%	1062	70.8%	1500	100.0%



**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED Crosstabulation**

			EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED		Total
			YES	NO	
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	54	212	266
		% within EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED	57.4%	61.6%	60.7%
		Residual	-3.1	3.1	
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	37	120	157
		% within EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED	39.4%	34.9%	35.8%
		Residual	3.3	-3.3	
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	3	12	15
		% within EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED	3.2%	3.5%	3.4%
		Residual	-.2	.2	
	Total	Count	94	344	438
		% within EVER BEEN DIVORCED OR SEPARATED	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.645(a)	2	.725

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.22.

***Race and Marital Happiness***

Race of the respondent is the next variable that I tested. Race is a nominal level variable. This makes a cross tabulation the correct procedure to run. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and the respondent's race.

Table 11 yields a chi-square value of 2.702. This value has a significance of 0.609.

Since 0.609 is greater than the supposed 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis

cannot be rejected. This means that the two variables are not significantly related to each other. The lack of residual pattern in Table 11 supports this claim. This does not support my hypothesis that *white people experience more happiness in marriage than blacks or others*.

**Table 11: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage & Race**  
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * RACE OF RESPONDENT	790	52.7%	710	47.3%	1500	100.0%

**HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* RACE OF RESPONDENT Crosstabulation**

			RACE OF RESPONDENT			
			WHITE	BLACK	OTHER	Total
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	379	77	32	488
		% within RACE OF RESPONDENT	61.2%	60.6%	72.7%	61.8%
		Residual	-3.4	-1.5	4.8	
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	220	47	11	278
		% within RACE OF RESPONDENT	35.5%	37.0%	25.0%	35.2%
		Residual	2.2	2.3	-4.5	
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	20	3	1	24
		% within RACE OF RESPONDENT	3.2%	2.4%	2.3%	3.0%
		Residual	1.2	-.9	-.3	
Total	Count	619	127	44	790	
	% within RACE OF RESPONDENT	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.702(a)	4	.609

a. 2 cells (22.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.34.

### *Religion and Marital Happiness*

The last variable is “religion”. This is a nominal level variable. Thus a cross tabulation procedure is the best test to use to uncover any possible relationship between the two variables. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between happiness in marriage and a respondent’s religious affiliation. Table 12 shows that the cross tabulation produces a chi-square statistic of 23.553 that has a significance level of 0.487. Since 0.487 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that religious affiliation has no bearing on a respondent’s happiness in marriage. No clear residual pattern can be seen in Table 12. This reinforces the fact that a significant relationship does not exist between the two variables. This does not support my hypothesis wrong. Catholic’s are not more likely to report being happily married than people of other religious denominations.

**Table 12: Crosstabs for Happiness in Marriage and Religion**  
Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE * RS RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	790	52.7%	710	47.3%	1500	100.0%

## HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE \* RS RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE Crosstabulation

			RS RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE														Total
			PROTESTANT	CATHOLIC	JEWISH	NON	OTHER (SPECIFY)	BUDHISM	HINDUISM	OTHER EASTERN	MOSLEM/ISLAM	ORTHODOX-CHRISTIAN	CHRISTIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	INTERNON-DENOMINATIONAL		
HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	VERY HAPPY	Count	264	130	7	64	8	3	0	1	3	1	6	1	0	488	
		% within RS RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	61.8 %	63.4 %	41.2 %	64.6 %	57.1 %	60.0 %	.0 %	100.0 %	75.0 %	100.0 %	60.0 %	100.0 %	.0 %	61.8 %	
		Residual	.2	3.4	-3.5	2.8	-6	-.1	1.2	.4	.5	.4	-.2	.4	2.5		
	PRETTY HAPPY	Count	150	66	10	34	6	2	2	0	1	0	3	0	4	278	
		% within RS RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	35.1 %	32.2 %	58.8 %	34.3 %	42.9 %	40.0 %	10.0 %	.0 %	25.0 %	.0 %	30.0 %	.0 %	10.0 %	35.2 %	
		Residual	-.3	-6.1	4.0	-.8	1.1	.2	1.3	-.4	-.4	-.4	-.5	-.4	2.6		
	NOT TOO HAPPY	Count	13	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	24	
		% within RS RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE	3.0 %	4.4 %	.0 %	1.0 %	.0 %	.0 %	.0 %	.0 %	.0 %	.0 %	10.0 %	.0 %	.0 %	3.0 %	
		Residual	.0	2.8	-.5	2.0	-.4	-.2	-.1	.0	-.1	.0	.7	.0	-.1		
Total		Count	427	205	17	99	14	5	2	1	4	1	10	1	4	790	

## **VI. Conclusions, Implications and Limitations**

The findings reveal that, out of my original 14 independent variables, only two of them are significantly related to my dependent variable. The variables “income 4” (income variation) and “sat job” (job satisfaction) are the only two that show a significant relationship to happiness in marriage. People who make \$60,000.00 or more a year are more likely to report being very happily married and people who are very satisfied with their job are more likely to report being very happily married. The fact that only two of the 14 variables are related to happiness with marriage is odd when comparing the literature review with my results. The literature review uncovered that religion, race, education, social class, sex, age, and number of children should have all been related to the happiness levels of a marriage. The fact that they have been shown to have no effect could mean various things.

First, religion may not be such a big factor today in marriages as it once was in the past. Religion has lost much of its hold on people and thus may simply not be that significant of a factor anymore. People who are not religious are not doomed to an unhappy marriage life because society’s view of the importance of religion is not as strict as it once may have been. People still get married in churches for the most part but that may be more for traditional purposes than long standing devotion to God. Also, people seem likely today to marry someone who is outside of their religion. This again weakens the power of religion because people are marrying whom they want regardless of where their faith lies. Taking these facts into account, maybe it is not so surprising that religion is not a factor in happiness in a marriage.

Race is another of those factors whose impact is on the decline in today's culture. Inter-racial marriages seem to be more and more prevalent in society and they are proof that people of different races can have happy marriages. The Marxian logic that whites oppress minority groups and thus should have better marriages is also a fact that no longer holds as much power as it once did. Minority groups are growing exponentially in number and are finding today's society a lot more sympathetic and accepting of them. Whites no longer necessarily are the only ones who are happily married because blacks and Hispanics find themselves in a time and place where they have more and more equal opportunities to overcome the racial barriers that once prevented them from fully enjoying life.

It makes sense that higher education should be associated with happiness in marriage for no other reason than higher education is associated with higher income and higher income has been shown to be related to marital happiness. The fact that it is not supported in my study might mean that jobs are paying more to people who have less education. If the economy is in an upswing, people with a high school diploma may be making enough money to provide for a happy marriage. Maybe people do not need 20 years of schooling to be happy in their marriages. Also, a man or woman with a lot of education may be married to someone with a little education and still manage to be happily married. Society is changing and adapting so that the old prejudices and stigmas are gradually fading from the public mind. A significant relationship may have been found if the education variable was for both spouses rather than just for one.

Social class is an interesting variable because it did not come up as being related

to happiness in marriage even though high income did. I believe that this is because \$60,000.00 or more a year is too broad a category when dealing with income. Upper-class people obviously make more than \$60,000.00 a year. \$60,000.00 a year is middle class or even working class territory when dealing with married couples. I think that this explains the disparity between income and class and just leaves the possibility that upper-class married people may be just as unhappy as working class married people.

The fact that sex does not affect marital happiness could be a sign of the equality that women have gained at home and in the work place. Society has indeed changed and women may no longer be the caretakers of the family. It is no longer unusual to hear about stay at home dads or full time job mothers. The Marxian inequalities that used to exist between the sexes seem to have evolved and changed for the better.

Old people do not experience more happiness in marriage than younger couples do. People can be happily married no matter what their age. No age group is more prone to being happily married. Maybe the U-shaped curve that some of the authors from my literature review talked about is straightening with the passage of time. Another factor may be that people are getting married at later ages and the U-shape has constricted to the point that it is no longer there.

Number of children is not a factor and that may have been hinted at by the difference in opinion by the authors over whether or not children helped or hindered happiness in marriage. That seems to be more a personal effect rather than something that could be generalized to married people as a whole. Children seem to have no effect on happiness levels in a marriage either way.

The fact that people who make \$60,000.00 a year or more and people who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be very happily married has several implications. Obviously, policies that target increasing job satisfaction are needed to try and get people to enjoy being at work. I realize that this may be hard or even impossible in some cases but caring management and pride in a finished product could be factors that could increase people's job satisfaction. Policies could be issued that target work lounge facilities. Improved and updated vending machines and sitting areas may make workers feel that they are valued and that management cares about them. Also, policies could be made that allow workers to have a more hands on approach to their job. Classes could be taught that show the workers the good that their product does for others and that they are needed by society to fulfill their jobs. A worker who can take pride in what he or she makes will most likely feel satisfied by his or her job. The whole process of production line assembly has stolen the pride away from the makers of the product and landed them in tedious, boring jobs that leave them unsatisfied at work and at home. Keep the production line but maybe move workers around each day so they can see the different parts that go into the finished product. And the fact that job satisfaction can positively or negatively affect marital happiness suggests that it could also affect other areas of well-being. Policy is also needed so that jobs pay more fairly. Someone who makes minimal wage while busting his or her back all day is not going to feel satisfied by his or her job. When this dissatisfaction seeps into the home life, it can have a negative impact on the happiness of the marriage.

Looking at income levels, maybe policy could be initiated that provides



availability of marital counseling to people who make less money at low or no cost. People who make less than \$60,000.00 a year may benefit greatly from a trained specialist who can help them through marital problems that involve money. Different payment plans could even be made that give people who make less more time to pay bills. I am not implying that they should be given anything for free, but maybe it would relieve stress at home if a couple knew that they had a little extra time to get the gas bill paid.

Limitations to this study came primarily through the low number of respondents who said that they were not too happily married. The fact that this number is so low may be attributed to the fact that people are unwilling to admit that they are not too happy with their marriage. If this is the case then this low number could have affected my outcomes from what they ought to be.

The problem of self reporting may also be a factor that limits this study. Respondents may lie or misunderstand the questions that are presented to them. A respondent may be unwilling to say that he or she is pretty happily married in favor of saying that he or she is very happily married.

Another limitation is the fact that I was limited in the number of variables that I had available to me. The General Social Survey is only composed of so many variables and only a fraction of them relate to happiness in marriage. If I had made my own surveys and administered them myself, I could have allotted for variables that the GSS did not have. But this was not done because of other limitations, those of time and the cost of probability sampling. Administering surveys and then coding them and testing

them would have taken more time than is available under these circumstances.

There was also the limitation of my dependent variable. Two of the three categories of marital happiness reflect happiness with marriage while only one reflects unhappiness. Perhaps a few more options would have been helpful, such as “pretty unhappily married” and “very unhappily married” instead of “not too happily married.” This lack of options may have influenced people who are just a little unhappy with their marriage to report being “pretty happily married” instead of “not too happily married.”

The last limitation that I can see is that existing data is always changing. The GSS data I was using may already be outdated and thus irrelevant. But this is a chance that a researcher must take when using other people’s data.

For future study it may prove useful to run a multiple regression analysis in order to see which of the two significant variables influences marital happiness more. It also may prove useful for future study to look at people who responded that they were divorced or separated in addition to the married respondents. This would allow for extra insight into the factors which influence marital happiness.

## Appendix

**Table 2: Oneway for Happiness in Marriage & Education**  
Descriptives

HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED

	N	Mean
VERY HAPPY	487	13.25
PRETTY HAPPY	277	13.29
NOT TOO HAPPY	24	12.83
Total	788	13.25

### ANOVA

HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.583	2	2.291	.288	.750
Within Groups	6243.666	785	7.954		
Total	6248.249	787			

## Post Hoc Tests

### Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED

Bonferroni

(I) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	(J) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VERY HAPPY	PRETTY HAPPY	-.038	.212	1.000	-.55	.47
	NOT TOO HAPPY	.417	.590	1.000	-1.00	1.83
PRETTY HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	.038	.212	1.000	-.47	.55
	NOT TOO HAPPY	.455	.600	1.000	-.98	1.90
NOT TOO HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-.417	.590	1.000	-1.83	1.00
	PRETTY HAPPY	-.455	.600	1.000	-1.90	.98

Appendix

**Table 7: Oneway for Happiness in Marriage & Hours**  
Descriptives

Number of Hours Worked Last Week

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
VERY HAPPY	310	42.92	14.411	.818	41.31	44.53	2	8
PRETTY HAPPY	183	42.13	15.214	1.125	39.91	44.35	2	8
NOT TOO HAPPY	15	37.93	13.499	3.485	30.46	45.41	15	6
Total	508	42.49	14.679	.651	41.21	43.77	2	8

**ANOVA**

Number of Hours Worked Last Week

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	393.023	2	196.512	.912	.402
Within Groups	108847.928	505	215.540		
Total	109240.951	507			

**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Number of Hours Worked Last Week  
Bonferroni

(I) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	(J) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VERY HAPPY	PRETTY HAPPY	.791	1.369	1.000	-2.50	4.08
	NOT TOO HAPPY	4.989	3.881	.598	-4.33	14.31
PRETTY HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-.791	1.369	1.000	-4.08	2.50
	NOT TOO HAPPY	4.198	3.943	.863	-5.27	13.67
NOT TOO HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-4.989	3.881	.598	-14.31	4.33
	PRETTY HAPPY	-4.198	3.943	.863	-13.67	5.27

## Appendix

**Table : Oneway for Happiness in Marriage & Age**  
Descriptives

AGE OF RESPONDENT

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VERY HAPPY	485	46.64	17.576	.798	45.07	48.20
PRETTY HAPPY	276	44.30	16.698	1.005	42.33	46.28
NOT TOO HAPPY	24	46.25	15.735	3.212	39.61	52.89
Total	785	45.80	17.234	.615	44.60	47.01

## ANOVA

AGE OF RESPONDENT

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	960.450	2	480.225	1.619	.199
Within Groups	231891.339	782	296.536		
Total	232851.789	784			

## Post Hoc Tests

### Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: AGE OF RESPONDENT

Bonferroni

(I) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	(J) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VERY HAPPY	PRETTY HAPPY	2.331	1.298	.219	-.78	5.45
	NOT TOO HAPPY	.385	3.601	1.000	-8.25	9.02
PRETTY HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-2.331	1.298	.219	-5.45	.78
	NOT TOO HAPPY	-1.946	3.665	1.000	-10.74	6.85
NOT TOO HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-.385	3.601	1.000	-9.02	8.25
	PRETTY HAPPY	1.946	3.665	1.000	-6.85	10.74

# Appendix

## Table : Oneway for Happiness in Marriage & TV Hours

### Descriptives

HOURS PER DAY WATCHING TV

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VERY HAPPY	486	2.68	1.879	.085	2.52	2.85
PRETTY HAPPY	277	2.67	1.829	.110	2.46	2.89
NOT TOO HAPPY	24	2.42	1.998	.408	1.57	3.26
Total	787	2.67	1.864	.066	2.54	2.80

### ANOVA

HOURS PER DAY WATCHING TV

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.624	2	.812	.233	.792
Within Groups	2728.140	784	3.480		
Total	2729.764	786			

## Post Hoc Tests

### Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: HOURS PER DAY WATCHING TV

Bonferroni

(I) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	(J) HAPPINESS OF MARRIAGE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VERY HAPPY	PRETTY HAPPY	.012	.140	1.000	-.33	.35
	NOT TOO HAPPY	.266	.390	1.000	-.67	1.20
PRETTY HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-.012	.140	1.000	-.35	.33
	NOT TOO HAPPY	.255	.397	1.000	-.70	1.21
NOT TOO HAPPY	VERY HAPPY	-.266	.390	1.000	-1.20	.67
	PRETTY HAPPY	-.255	.397	1.000	-1.21	.70

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